

**INTERVIEW**

# Overhauling the CIA

**Former CIA chief Stansfield Turner says the agency needs to change with the world and put greater focus on economic intelligence.**

**Q: Robert Gates' confirmation hearings to head the CIA begin today. There has been a lot of talk about the need to reform the agency. Will the changes in the Soviet Union accelerate those reforms?**

A: While I anticipate considerable resistance in the CIA to shifting from Soviet intelligence, I hope the startling changes there will make it easier. The Soviet Union is not the major threat it was perceived to be a few years ago.

**Q: Why do you think there will be resistance?**

A: The CIA was born in 1947 in the Cold War and did a great deal to help win the Cold War. It's going to be difficult to change. It's going to be very upsetting to people who are Soviet experts and who speak Russian. They're going to have to become experts on the Third World. On the military side, to ask intelligence to downplay military matters is almost unacceptable.

**Q: If the Soviets are a lesser threat, where should the emphasis be placed?**

A: The security of our country is more dependent today than ever before on our economic competitiveness. It rivals our military preparedness as the key to national security.

**Q: What needs to be done?**

A: That places more emphasis on our satellite collectors. If

you're going to collect economic intelligence, you're talking largely about collecting information about your closest friends because they're your economic competitors. You don't want to get caught with an agent under the prime minister's bed planting a bug. That's not very conducive to good relations, and our relations are important today.

**Q: Should the intelligence budget be increased?**

A: It's impractical to think in terms of increasing it. But I hope it will not diminish as much as the defense budget. It's quite proper that, when your defense elements are going to contract, you may want to increase the intelligence assets so you have better warning of when you're going to need the military ones.

**Q: What do you think needs restructuring at the agency?**

A: It's time to give the director of central intelligence more authority over all these agencies that collect information. The head of the National Security Agency should be appointed by the director of central intelligence, not by the secretary of Defense. Same with the head of the reconnaissance office. The director should be given additional authority to control the dissemination of the information collected by all these other agencies.

**Q: So you're saying the di-**

**rector needs more power?**

A: Today, the director of central intelligence has a reasonable amount of authority to bring all these things together, but he doesn't have enough. On top of that, he is burdened by being the head of the CIA in addition to being the director of central intelligence. That's a full-time job. We should separate the job of running the intelligence community from the job of running the CIA.

**Q: What future challenges will we see?**

A: We are in an information age. Information increasingly is power. This country has the ability today to collect more information and evaluate it better than anybody in the world. We don't want to lose that.

**Q: Some say part of the problem is not the lack of information but that there's so much of it we can't analyze it all. Is that true?**

A: It's going to be more that way because the world is becoming more open and more democratic. Public debates will take place that formerly were totally closed.

**Q: Is there still a place for covert action?**

A: Yes. You can even make an argument there will be increased demands for covert action if you want to stop drug trafficking and terrorism. There probably are other things that we will want to use covert action against. My feeling, though, is that these opportunities will be rather few and far between.

**Q: What do you think of some calls for the CIA to be disbanded altogether?**

A: That would be very unfortunate because the one thing the country needs is a single agency in intelligence that's not associated with policy — and the CIA is the only one.

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Turner

*Stansfield Turner, 67, is a former director of the CIA and a retired admiral. He is currently lecturing and doing consulting work. He's also an author; his most recent book is Terrorism and Democracy (Houghton Mifflin). Turner was interviewed by USA TODAY's Sam Vincent Meddis about the Robert Gates confirmation hearings and about possible changes in the role of the CIA.*